

**PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO VALIDATE THE  
SPECIFIC NAME "OBSCURA" BEREZOWSKY & BIANCHI,  
1891, AS PUBLISHED IN THE COMBINATION "LARVIVORA  
OBSCURA" (CLASS AVES)**

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(Commission's reference : Z.N.(S.) 876)

The object of the present application is to ask the Commission to use its Plenary Powers for the purpose of validating the specific name *obscura* Berezowsky & Bianchi, 1891 (*Aves Exped. Potanini Gan-su* : 97, pl. 1, fig. 2), as published in the combination *Larvivora obscura*, a name which is an invalid junior secondary homonym, in the genus *Luscinia* Forster, 1817, of the specific name *obscura* Brehm (C.L.), 1831 (*Handb. Naturgesch. Vögel Deutschl.* : 353), as published in the combination *Cyanecula obscura*.

2. The bird described as *Larvivora obscura* by Berezowsky & Bianchi is rare and in consequence the name *obscura* has not been cited often in the literature. It has however been in continuous use for sixty-one years (i.e. up to 1952) and has been used in every ornithological standard work such as Sharpe, 1903, *Hand List of the Genera and Species of Birds* (4 : 157); Hartert, 1910, *Die Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna* (1) : 741; Smythies, 1953, *The Birds of Burma* : 104, and the entire Russian ornithological literature.

3. In 1952 (*Postilla*, New Haven No. 13 : 24), however, Ripley pointed out that the name *obscura* Berezowsky & Bianchi, 1891, is invalid by reason of being a junior secondary homonym in the genus *Luscinia* of the name *obscura* Brehm, 1804, and replaced it by the name *hachisukae* in the combination *Erythacus hachisukae*. The name *obscura* Brehm, however, has never once been used in ornithology since it was first published, for it is a junior subjective synonym of *cyanecula* Meisner, 1804 (*Syst. Verz. Vög. Schweiz.* : 30), as published in the combination *Sylvia cyanecula* (= *Luscinia svecica cyanecula* (Meisner)). Even as a synonym, the name *obscura* Brehm has apparently been cited only once, namely, by Hartert (1910, *Die Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna* (1) : 748). It should be noted also that in spite of his having cited this name as a synonym, Hartert (:741) retained the name *obscura* Berezowsky & Bianchi in combination with the same generic name (*Luscinia*) as that under which he had cited *obscura* Brehm (as a junior synonym of *Luscinia svecica cyanecula*).

4. There is thus no danger whatever of the name *obscura* Berezowsky & Bianchi, 1891 (which as already explained has been in continuous use for over sixty years), being confused with the name *obscura* Brehm, which was a junior synonym of another name (*cyanecula* Meisner) at the time when it was first published and has not been adopted by a single author in the period of one

hundred and twenty-three years which has since elapsed. In these circumstances it is considered that no useful purpose would be served by rejecting and replacing the name *obscura* Berezowsky & Bianchi and that the interests of stability in nomenclature will be promoted by the Commission using its Plenary Powers to prevent this change from taking place.

5. The present application is submitted to the Commission after consultation with, and in agreement with, Professor Ernst Mayr (*Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Mass.*), and with my colleague Dr. Dean Amadon (*Museum of Natural History, New York*) who writes : "I am in full agreement with Dr. Vaurie and support the present application".

6. For the reasons set out above, the International Commission is asked :—

- (1) to use its Plenary Powers to suppress the under-mentioned specific name for the purposes both of the Law of Priority and of those of the Law of Homonymy :—*obscura* Brehm (C.L.), 1831, as published in the combination *Cyanecula obscura* ;
- (2) to place the under-mentioned specific name on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* :—*obscura* Berezowsky & Bianchi, 1891, as published in the combination *Larvivora obscura* ;
- (3) to place the under-mentioned specific names on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology* :—
  - (a) *obscura* Brehm (C.L.), 1831, as published in the combination *Cyanecula obscura* and as suppressed under the Plenary Powers under (1) above ;
  - (b) *hachisukae* Ripley, 1952, as published in the combination *Erithacus hachisukae* (a junior objective synonym of *obscura* Berezowsky & Bianchi, 1891, as published in the combination *Larvivora obscura*).

**OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED VALIDATION UNDER THE PLENARY POWERS OF CERTAIN GENERIC NAMES AS FROM RENIER, [1804], "PROSPETTO", CONSEQUENT UPON THE REJECTION OF THAT WORK FOR NOMENCLATORIAL PURPOSES**

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(Commission's reference : Z.N.(S.) 832)

(For the proposal submitted in this case, see 1954, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 9(9) : 263)

(Letter dated 27th November 1954)

Since the work in which those four names were originally published has been suppressed it would seem wiser not to resurrect them again. Let them remain interred.